

Message Text

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10

ACTION AF-06

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L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

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DEPT PASS PHNOM PENH

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, CB, ZA

SUBJECT: CAMBODIA: SIHANOUK'S CONVERSATION WITH ZAMBIAN FONMIN

SUMMARY: ZAMBIAN FONMIN VERNON MWAANGA RETURNED MARCH 14 TO LUSAKA FROM TWO-WEEK TRIP TO FAR EAST. WHILE IN PEKING, MWAANGA LUNCED WITH PRINCE SIHANOUK. ACCORDING TO FONMIN OFFICIAL WHO ACCOMPANIED MWAANGA, ZAMBIANS FOUND SIHANOUK ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO OPENING NEGOTIATIONS WITH EITHER LON NOL OR WITH USG. INSTEAD, SIHANOUK INSISTED USG MUST "NEGOTIATE" WITH LON NOL TERMS FOR CAMBODIAN SETTLEMENT. ZAMBIANS LEFT WITH IMPRESSION SIHANOUK NOT FULLY IN CONTROL OF SITUATION AND BEING USED BY KHMER ROUGE. THERE NO SIGN, HOWEVER, THAT LONG-STANDING ZAMBIAN POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR SIHANOUK AND OPPOSITION TO LON NOL WILL CHANGE DESPITE APPARENT ZAMBIAN DISAPPOINTMENT WITH SIHANOUK REFUSAL TO CONSIDER NEGOTIATED PEACE SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF CALLED MARCH 18 ON FONMIN DIRECTOR OF ASIAN AFFAIRS MWEEMBE WHO ACCOMPANIED MWAANGA ON LATTER'S VISIT

THIS MONTH TO SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, PHILIPPINES, CONFIDENTIAL

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HONG KONG, JAPAN AND CHINA. PRIOR THEIR DEPARTURE, EMB HAD

PROVIDED MWEEMBE WITH MATERIALS ON SOUTHEAST ASIA
AND MARCH 18 CONVERSATION QUICKLY FOCUSED ON CAMBODIA.

2. WHILE IN PEKING, MWAANGA AND MWEEMBE LUNCHEONED WITH PRINCE SIHANOUK AND SOME OF HIS AIDES ON MARCH 11. MWEEMBE SAID ZAMBIANS FOUND SIHANOUK ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO ENTERING INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH LON NOL. SIHANOUK ALSO SAID HE NOT INCLINED NEGOTIATE WITH SECY KISSINGER EITHER, DESPITE REPEATED URGINGS BY CHINESE, INCLUDING PREMIER CHOU, THAT HE DO SO. SIHANOUK MAINTAINED IT UP TO USG TO "NEGOTIATE" CAMBODIAN SETTLEMENT DIRECTLY WITH LON NOL. BY THIS ZAMBIANS INTERPRETED SIHANOUK AS MEANING THAT USG SHOULD ARRANGE FOR LON NOL'S REMOVAL, THEREBY ASSURING COLLAPSE OF KHMER REPUBLIC AND PAVING WAY FOR KHMER ROUGE VICTORY.

3. EMBOFF INFERRED FROM MWEEMBE REMARKS ZAMBIANS BOTH SURPRISED AND SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED BY SIHANOUK'S UNWILLINGNESS TO TAKE OPPORTUNITY OFFERED BY LON NOL TO NEGOTIATE END TO FIGHTING. SIHANOUK, ACCORDING TO MWEEMBE, REFUSED TO DO SO BECAUSE HE UNWILLING TO NEGOTIATE WITH OPPONENT WHOM HE CONSIDERS TO BE NOW IN SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKER POSITION THAN HIS OWN. MWEEMBE THOUGHT SIHANOUK SEEKS TOTAL VICTORY AND SEEMS UNWILLING ACCEPT ANY SOLUTION SHORT OF COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF HIS ENEMY'S FORCES, LEAVING LON NOL OR HIS SUCCESSORS NO BARGAINING POSITION. EMBOFF POINTED OUT IT PREMATURE TO COUNT PHNOM PENH AS HAVING FALLEN, ESPECIALLY AS FINAL WORD ON US MILITARY RESUPPLY EFFORT NOT YET IN, AND FIGHTING MIGHT VERY WELL BE PROLONGED FOR SOME TIME.

4. MWEEMBE SAID ZAMBIANS HAD FOUND IT SURPRISING SIHANOUK REMAINS IN PEKING AT TIME WHEN HE CLAIMS OVER 90 PERCENT OF CAMBODIA UNDER CONTROL OF HIS SUPPORTERS. MWEEMBE WONDERED WHETHER KHMER ROUGE WILL REALLY WELCOME RETURN TO CAMBODIA OF MAN WHO HAS SAT OUT CIVIL WAR FAIRLY COMFORTABLY IN PEKING RATHER THAN IN JUNGLES. DURING LUNCHEON, SIHANOUK HAD BEEN AT PAINS TO REASSURE HIS ZAMBIA GUESTS THAT STORIES KHMER ROUGE NOT SOLIDLY BEHIND HIM WERE FALSE. MWEEMBE IMPLIED ZAMBIANS WERE UNCONVINCED BY THESE ASSURANCES AND ARE UNCERTAIN WHETHER SIHANOUK FULLY IN CONTROL OF SITUATION. FOR EXAMPLE, MWEEMBE SAID, SIHANOUK HAD STRESSED HIS FORCES UNWILLING TO BOMBARD CONFIDENTIAL

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PHNOM PENH TO AVOID DESTRUCTION OF CAPITAL AND ITS INSTALLATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, KHMER ROUGE FORCES HAVE BEEN SHELLING CITY INDISCRIMINATELY. TO MWEEMBE THIS SUGGESTS SIHANOUK MAY EITHER BE UNAWARE OF OR UNABLE TO CONTROL ACTIONS OF KHMER ROUGE COMMANDERS IN FIELD.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH ZAMBIANS APPEAR TO HAVE COME AWAY FROM MEETING WITH SIHANOUK WITH SOME PRIVATE REYQVATIONS ABOUT

BOTH HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS AND HIS OWN FUTURE WERE
KHMER ROUGE TO SECURE MILITARY VICTORY, WE DETECT NO SIGNS
THEIR LONG-STANDING SUPPORT FOR HIM OR THEIR OPPOSITION TO
LON NOL GOVT IS LIKELY TO WAVER. SIHANOUK REMAINS FOR ZAMBIANS
AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN HISTORY OF NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND
THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO BACK OFF FROM THEIR POLITICAL
SUPPORT OF HIM AT TIME WHEN SIHANOUK'S PROSPECTS FOR VICTORY
APPEAR GREATER THAN ANY TIME SINCE 1970. (THIS POSITION
REFLECTED IN ZAMBIAIRADIO NEWS COMMENTARY BROADCAST MARCH 18
IN WHICH VICTORY OF SIHANOUK'S FORCES OVER "PUPPET" LON NOL
WAS PREDICTED AND US ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORT TO PROVIDE
ADDITIONAL MILITARY AID TO LON NOL IN FACE OF AMERICAN PUBLIC
AND CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION WAS IMPLICITLY CRITICIZED.)
HOWEVER, IF PHNOM PENH SURVIVES CURRENT SIEGE AND CIVIL WAR
LOOKS LIKE IT MAY BE PROLONGED, ZAMBIAN DOUBTS ABOUT WISDOM
OF SIHANOUK HARD LINE COULD GROW AND TEMPER--BUT WITHOUT
SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZING--ZAMBIA'S SUPPORT FOR SIDE WHICH
CONTINUES TO SPURN OPPORTUNITIES TO BRING WAR TO END THROUGH
NEGOTIATIONS.
WILKOWSKI

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED PHNOM PENH.

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